

Message Text

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PAGE 01 KINGST 00394 021323Z

51
ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 OMB-01 AID-20 PC-10 OPR-02 SY-10 EB-11

CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-04 RSC-01 USIA-15

PRS-01 SPC-03 SAM-01 PM-07 NSC-10 DRC-01 /128 W
----- 046828

R 012028Z FEB 74
FM AMEMBASSY KINGSTON
TO SECSTATE WASHD 3891
INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN
AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, JM
SUBJ: PAROCHIAL ELECTIONS - VIOLENCE

REF: KINGSTON 091

1. SUMMARY: THE INTER-PARTY STRUGGLE IN THE CURRENT ELECTION CAMPAIGN HAS RESULTED IN SOME VIOLENCE AND RECRIMINATIONS IN CERTAIN AREAS OF KINGSTON, BUT NOT IN THE COUNTRY AT LARGE. OBSERVERS INDICATE A LOW LEVEL OF INTEREST IN THE ELECTION AND A CONSEQUENT LOW TURN-OUT AT THE POLLS. END SUMMARY.

2. WHILE THE PARISH COUNCIL ELECTION CAMPAIGN IN MOST OF THE COUNTRY HAS BEEN CONDUCTED PEACEFULLY, THERE HAS BEEN CONSIDERABLE DISORDER IN THE SOUTHERN ST. ANDREW CONSTITUENCY OF MINISTER OF HOUSING ANTHONY SPAULDING. THE DISORDER BEGAN ON FRIDAY, JAN 25 WHEN IN THE COURSE OF A ROUTINE PATROL A POLICE/MILITARY TEAM ROUNDED UP A GROUP OF SUSPECTED CRIMINALS, SOME OF WHOM WERE GRANTED IMMEDIATE BAIL, ALLEGEDLY BECAUSE OF THE DIRECT INTERVENTION OF SPAULDING. THE NEXT DAY, A NUMBER OF DETECTIVES AT THE LOCAL POLICE STATION REPORTED "SICK", PURPORTEDLY IN PROTEST AGAINST SPAULDING'S INTERFERENCE. (THE COMMISSIONER OF POLICE

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PAGE 02 KINGST 00394 021323Z

LATER EXPLAINED THE ABSENTEEISM AS "NORMAL.")

3. ON JAN 27, THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION CHARGED THE POLICE WITH "POLITICAL INTERFERENCE" IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS AND INTIMATED THAT SUCH ORDERS TO THE POLICE FROM JAMAICA HOUSE (THE PRIME MINISTER'S RESIDENCE) WERE NOTHING NEW. HE SAID THAT CRIME COULD NOT BE STAMPED OUT IN JAMAICA WHEN POLITICIANS COULD IMPOSE THEIR WILL ON THE POLICE.

4. IN A STATEMENT, SUBSEQUENTLY BACKED BY THE CABINET, THE LEADER OF GOVT BUSINESS IN THE HOUSE AND MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, KEBLE MUNN, SAID THAT ANY PERSON FOUND GUILTY OF INTERFERING WITH THE ACTIVITIES OF THE POLICE WOULD BE DEALT WITH ACCORDING TO THE LAW. SPAULDING IS REPORTED TO HAVE TOLD THE CABINET THAT, WHILE HE HAD NO OBJECTION TO THE POLICE/MILITARY RAIDS, EVEN IN HIS OWN CONSTITUENCY, HE DID OBJECT TO "CERTAIN ASPECTS" OF THEIR WORK.

5. IN RELATED INCIDENTS, A JLP CANDIDATE IN THE SAME VICINITY WAS ATTACKED BY A MOB AND BEATEN ON JAN 31, AND THE ADMIRAL'S TOWN POLICE STATION, WHERE THE ORIGINAL INCIDENT TOOK PLACE WAS BOMBED IN THE MORNING OF JAN 31.

6. RESPONDING TO THE INCREASING VIOLENCE IN CERTAIN AREAS OF KINGSTON METROPOLITAN AREA, THE PM ISSUED A STATEMENT ON JAN 31 IN WHICH HE CONDEMNED THE RECURRING INCIDENTS OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND ORDERED INCREASED POLICE/MILITARY PATROLS OF THOSE AREAS.

7. COMMENT: SPAULDING'S CONSTITUENCY IS PROBABLY THE MOST VOLATILE ARE IN ALL OF JAMAICA AND THE ONE IN WHICH POLITICAL GANGS AND CRIMINALS OPERATE THE MOST FREELY. OCCASIONAL VIOLENCE THERE IS THEREFORE NOT UNUSUAL, NOR IS SPAULDING'S INTERVENTION ON BEHALF OF HIS FOLLOWERS. OTHER POTENTIALLY VIOLENT AREAS - EDWARD SEAGA'S WEST KINGSTON AND MICHAEL MANLEY'S CENTRAL KINGSTON - HAVE, THUS FAR, BEEN QUIET AND THERE HAVE BEEN NO INCIDENTS REPORTED IN THE NORTH COAST TOURIST AREAS. ONE OBSERVER HAS COMMENTED THAT, SO LONG AS SPORADIC POLITICAL CLASHES DO NOT SPREAD BEYOND WESTERN KINGSTON AND SOUTHERN ST. ANDREW, THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN CAN BE CONSIDERED "NORMAL."

8. WHILE THE ECONOMIC STAGNATION OF THE PAST YEAR WOULD INDICATE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 KINGST 00394 021323Z

A SUBSTANTIAL SWING AWAY FROM THE GOVT PARTY, THE DISORDER IN OPPOSITION RANKS WILL PROBABLY ASSURE THAT THE PNP AT LEAST HOLDS ITS OWN, AND ANY INCREASE IN SUPPORT FOR THE PNP WILL BE HAILED AS A VICTORY AND A FURTHER MANDATE FOR THE PM'S POLICIES. MOST LOCAL OBSERVERS HAVE INDICATED A GENERAL LOW LEVEL OF INTEREST IN THE ELECTION AND A CONSEQUENT LOW VOTER TURNOUT ON TUESDAY, CONDITIONS FAVORABLE TO THE PARTY IN POWER.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CRIMES, PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS, OPPOSITION PARTIES, ELECTION CAMPAIGNS, CIVIL DISORDERS, POLICE FORCES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 01 FEB 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: MorefiRH
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974KINGST00394
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: KINGSTON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740263/aaaacgnw.tel
Line Count: 115
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: KINGSTON 091
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: MorefiRH
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 10 SEP 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <10 SEP 2002 by WorrelSW>; APPROVED <10-Sep-2002 by MorefiRH>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PAROCHIAL ELECTIONS - VIOLENCE
TAGS: PINT, JM
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005